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Neglected Arabia

QUARTERLY LETTERS AND NEWS

OF THE

ARABIAN MISSION



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MISSIONARY LETTERS AND NEWS FROM ARABIA.

July-September, 1904.

TWO LITTLE MISSIONARIES.

MISS ELIZABETH G. DE PREE.

Our friends at home, who are always so glad to share in the joys of their missionaries, will undoubtedly wish to share in their sorrows also, and therefore I would like to tell you something about the sickness and death of our two little missionaries, Katharina and Ruth Zwemer. The cholera had only just subsided, when all four of the children came down with a severe attack of the measles, with which Katharina developed broncho-pneumonia as a complication, and for nearly two weeks was in a very critical condition.

When the other children recovered and Katharina was convalescent, we planned a short outing to Sitra, a beautiful little island about six miles from here, for they were all looking pale and thin, and not in a condition to endure the extreme heat of July and August. We left on Tuesday, the twenty-eighth of June, and the first few days were delightful. The children all enjoyed the bathing, but none more than Ruth. She gained from the day we went there, and was looking the best of them all until on Sunday, July third. She had an attack of fever, and on Monday showed symptoms of dysentery. We sent for the necessary medicines, but when she gradually became worse, we decided to come home. She died on Thursday night. The following Sunday Katharina showed symptoms of the same disease, and after five days of dreadful suffering (and there never was a more patient little sufferer), she, too, passed away. She was seven years old in May.

I called them little missionaries, for so they were—preaching the gospel in song, and the Arab women listened to them gladly. Katharina often went with us when we visited the homes, “to evangelize the heathen,” as she rightly put it. She was known to them as



RUTH.

RAYMOND LULL.

KATHARINA.

BESSIE.

"Tahera," which means, the pure one. She was a remarkable child, and the Woman's Board had every reason to be proud of its baby. She had a number of verses marked in her little Testament, and in reply to her mother's question why she marked them, she said, "Because I likê them." She spoke very beautifully about going to heaven, and told Tufaha, the young Jewish girl who helps in the hospital, that she must love Jesus.

Ruth was too young to realize much except that going meant separation from her parents, and she said, "Me don't want to go, me wants to stay wid you, mamma."

The mission house is very lonely without them.

Katharina's favorite hymn, which she asked her father and mother to sing to her, shortly before she died, was

"Thou art coming, O, my Saviour,
 Thou art coming, O, my King,
 In Thy beauty all resplendent,
 In Thy glory all transcendent;
 Well may we rejoice and sing;
 Coming, in the opening east
 Herald brightness slowly swells;
 Coming; O, my glorious Priest,
 Hear we not **Thy** golden bells?"

Will not some of the young children at home, who read this, consecrate their lives to the cause of missions, and decide to prepare themselves to come out and help in this great work of "evangelizing the heathen," and so hasten the coming of our Saviour?

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK AT NASARIYEH.

REV. JOHN VAN ESS.

Of the particulars of a tour to our out-station Nasariyeh, nothing need be said. Such a tour has frequently been described in these pages. It is true, each missionary as he goes has different experiences, all depending on the conditions under which he travels, and such conditions always vary. There may be fighting among the Arabs, or cholera, or the preceding season may have been wet or dry, and the Arabs correspondingly good or ill humored. The devil may be active and the missionary find himself bound hand and foot with Turkish red-tape, or again, God's spirit may be moving mightily and inquirers be many and talks many. During my trip which lasted from March 22d till June 3d, there was fighting and cholera, but the Arabs with whom I had to deal were all in a good humor.

If the devil was active and tried to close the way with government opposition, I did not notice it, *for God's spirit was more active* and kept the way open sufficiently to let me squeeze through. I can speak in terms of nothing but the highest praise for the treatment I everywhere received from both the government and the people. For it all we praise God.



BOAT USED FOR TOURING ON THE EUPHRATES.

I want to give you the outlines of the different kinds of talks in which the Gospel was directly presented. Such talks were many, but I shall give you only a few typical examples. Let them teach you to sympathize with us in our difficulties and to rejoice with us in our successes.

1. *A government official of good education and wide experience.* Has spent many years at Constantinople and knows the ways of the Franks. Very cosmopolitan in his tastes, and progressive in his thinking. He is of the compromising class and can hold a contradiction without wincing. Granted the Divinity of Christ and the Trinity, but said those two doctrines were only aspects of one truth accommodated to Christian modes of thinking and indicative of God's plan in history. Thus he was a true Sabellian and was met accordingly. He is in reality a free-thinker, though he can quote the Koran very piously. He never prays except in company.

2. *An Armenian Christian of polished manners but extremely vacillating.* Is more French than Oriental, and decidedly liberal in his ideas. Decries all missionary work among Moslems and advocates civilization as the best Christianizer. Denies the supernatural birth of our Lord.

3. *An ex-officer in the army.* Read the Gospel and came under conviction of sin. Resigned his post and was imprisoned for two months on suspicion. Is very intelligent and understands thoroughly and accepts the way of salvation. Was led to his present state of mind by noting the contradictions in the Koran and by the reasonableness of the Christian religion.

4. *A Jew; a banker, very conversant with Hebrew and correspondingly bigoted.* Attacked the Christian Sabbath and asserted the perpetuity of the Old Testament injunctions. In reply, I quoted Psalms 51:16 and Hosea 6:6 and Jeremiah 31:31. He insisted on literal interpretation of all Messianic prophecies and so I suggested he interpret literally Joel 3:2.

5. *A Jew; a watchmaker, who quoted a few apparent contradictions in the New Testament.* He was referred to similar cases in the Old Testament.

6. *A young Moslem of good birth.* Has kept the Moslem law and yet knows there is something better. When told of the way, he went away "exceeding sorry, for he was very rich."

He came again, but stopped his ears to the Gospel word.

7. *A young Bedouin.* He first came to Mr. Moerdyk last year at night, and told him how in a dream his eyes had been opened to the truth. He was traveling in the desert when, tired and thirsty, a wonderful garden seemed to burst upon his view. His companions would not hasten to it. They feared it was a mirage. Just then appeared the gardener. His name was Jesus and He led the weary traveler to the flowing water. And now he is satisfied. This brother has read the Gospel many times since then and now rejoices in the light. He came always at night through fear. His family have cast him out, but he is steadfast. To hear him confess, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" would convince you that the Arabian Mission is vindicated and is worth all the toil and heartache of the past.

8. *A lieutenant in the Turkish army.* Of splendid education. He speaks some French and is quite a student of literature. Read the

"Beacon of Truth" and its Satanic reply. Says he fulfills the law perfectly and needs no Saviour. When asked why, he prayed, "I ask forgiveness of God," he replied, "God does me favors and I must needs acknowledge them."

Much like our *much obliged* which has no moral meaning to us. He asserted that the Gospel is corrupt and therefore presents no true picture of Christ's life. When asked to produce evidence, he left, saying he would return in five minutes. He did not return. He later became a close friend of mine and eventually lost all his arrogance. Pray for him, especially, for I believe he is thinking hard of the truth.

9. *A young government official, of the Hanifi sect and therefore liberal.* He described Mohammed as the paragon of creation. Accordingly, I asked him to listen to a comparison of his prophet and mine. Mohammed had natural parents, Christ had no natural father; Mohammed admittedly was a sinner, Christ said, "who convicteth Me of sin?" Mohammed called himself only a preacher and a warner, Christ avowed His own Divinity; Mohammed is dead, Christ is risen; Mohammed did no miracles, Christ did many. He granted all but the last statement and affirmed that on the contrary Mohammed had done many miracles. In answer, I quoted the Koran, "and what hindered me from sending thee with miracles except that the former ones were denied in spite of them?"

10. *A captain in the Turkish army, and graduate of the Constantinople War College.* He is stationed about one hundred miles down the river from Nasariyeh, but providentially had been sent to N. on detail and was also lodged in the Khan. I shall never forget the night he was ushered into my room. He was every inch a soldier, with his erect carriage and flowing moustaches and military grace. He saluted, and then to my surprise and in a low tone, "*Je suis un Chretien.*" My heart leaped for joy. Oh, Christ, forgive my past unbelief! We went to a secluded corner of the roof and there talked a long time. In straightforward language he told me that he had first been attracted to the religion of Christ because he saw that all progress ever made in the world was by and through Him. And so I told him why and explained the Great Mystery. That scene is indelibly impressed on my mind. Below us we could hear the waters of the Euphrates lapping the walls, above us shone the Mesopotamian heavens as they shone

when Abraham heard the voice of God in Ur so close at hand. It was near midnight and we were still talking about the things of life and death. He told me his brother, a private in the army, also shared his own thoughts and purposes. I had no chance to see him, however. The next day R—— left with a Turkish Bible hidden in his uniform. I hoped to see him again on my way back to Busrah, but he was temporarily absent from his post.

11. *A road-guard, whose grandfather, an Armenian, had become a Moslem, and the grandson now wished to return to the religion of his ancestors.* He was an inquirer at Busrah six years ago, then disappeared and now we meet him again as steadfast as ever. Many times he came to me at night, and each time I could see he had assimilated the substance of the former talk. Due to his training, he is absolutely fearless of danger, is remarkably sensible and well-read.

12. *A Turkish noble.* Of great wealth and influence, but shamefully corrupt in private life. Yet privately he admitted that Protestantism is the desideratum in this land. Due to his influence and friendship, I had all the freedom of speech I could-wish for.

13. *A retired politician* and a great friend of missionaries, because Mr. Zuemer had cured him of the drink habit ten years ago. He seemed a born diplomat and as such, fears Christianity.

14. *A teacher in the government school and a type of Moslem ritualists.* The letter killeth was my message to him. To him reason has very little place in religion, and so he is the truest Moslem I have ever met, for Islam is a religion without a philosophy. All rests on authority, precedent, injunction. He came so often that the Mufti at length forbade his coming. He waited a week and then continued his visits. One good result of his friendship: when the Bible shop was closed and the books sent to the Mufti, they were referred to him for inspection and promptly approved.

15. *The Imam of the Mosque,* who is looked upon as an example of right living and true piety. With him I discussed the whole range of differences which exist between us, together we roamed over all that is known and unknown in heaven above and the earth beneath, and the waters under the earth. For days in succession we treated of the Divinity of Christ, the Trinity, the genuineness of the Gospels, man's free will and inability, sin and redemption. Sometimes it was tiresome in the extreme, especially when he would quote at length some

Moslem doctor in theology. I was glad then I was a Dutchman and had learned to sit quietly and listen while the *dominie* expounded. But the Imam used beautiful Arabic—in fact, he is the only one I have ever heard who can pronounce correctly all the vowel points.

Only one disgusting feature, however—he could from talking about the sublime attributes of God descend to the lowest depths of degradation and revel in telling the vilest things—so vile that I would not repeat them even to a man.

At the end of the fourth day he seemed to realize that he was losing ground and so he brought

16. *An ascetic.* This ascetic was the cleverest controversialist I have ever met among Moslems. He was perfectly at home in the rules of correct thought and accurate definition, quick to follow up an advantage and merciless in pressing a conclusion. He could spar for an opening as skilfully as a campaign orator, and was as wily as only an Oriental can be. But knowing that Islam runs amuck of itself if consistently carried out, I let the ascetic defeat himself, only laying the bait as he successively came to each trap by occasionally asking a question for information. And then, on the ruins of his own merciless logic God helped me build the simple construction of His Gospel truth. The Imam and the ascetic seemed to see it, for they excused themselves and left.

17. *A Sabean* who, strange to say, freely talked of his own religion. But it is hard to present the Gospel to them, for we can find no starting point, they being so secretive.

18. *A middle-aged Arab.* A type of the ignorant class. He regaled (?) me for hours by telling me fables about Christ, asserting they were all found in the Gospel. Imagine his surprise when asked to find *one* in the Gospel I offered him.

19. *A Turkish civil engineer.* He was a man of liberal education and decidedly progressive. Had read Voltaire, Rousseau and Renan. He is outwardly a strict Moslem, but at heart very liberal and privately denied the duty of pilgrimage to Mecca.

20. *A major in the army.* He avowed that the Gospel is corrupted, and as evidence adduced the multiplicity of Christian sects, all proving that each must have a different Gospel. And when I asked whether that would not prove too much and overthrow the Koran as well, seeing there are so many sects in Islam, he arose in anger and said, "How

dare you speak with me. You can scarcely speak Arabic correctly."

These, my friends, are only the outlines of a few specimen talks. To describe them all in full with question and answer, would fill a volume. And so I have given you only the circumstances under which they were held. Of the many times in which the Gospel message was presented by means of the magic lantern or the passing word or by example; of how friendship was gained by the tooth forceps and the simple drug, by the camera and the catalogue of machinery, by suggestions for sanitation and irrigation; of how interest and respect were awakened by explaining wireless telegraphy and the freaks of radium—I need not tell. God used them all, I trust. And now the seed has again been planted.

Pray earnestly for the increase.

WORK AMONGST THE WOMEN AT BUSRAH.

MISS FANNY LUTTON.

Owing to my arrival in Busrah just as the summer set in, I have not been able to do very much visitation work. The facilities for this work are not as in Bahrein. Owing to the inability of finding a suitable house in Busrah, we are not able to live right amongst the people, and so we have quite a long distance to walk before we can get to them in their homes.

In Bahrein the Mission House is in the very midst of the people, and they are all Moslems; but in Busrah we have a mixed population of Moslems, Jews and Catholic Christians, all living under Turkish rule. We are free from this in Bahrein, therefore, we have greater opportunity.

Now come with me to the Mission dispensary and you will see these three classes assembled, which I have mentioned. They are waiting for medical treatment. What a vast difference in their creeds and belief!

It seems a great difficulty to face, but let this thought predominate: they do not know Jesus Christ as the Saviour, "the only Name that is given under Heaven whereby men can be saved," and that you are His ambassador proclaiming "the everlasting Gospel."

I wish you could see their faces (and if you are a woman you have

that privilege) and hear their responses; they are as good as the Irish people for exclamations. I have taught them a short prayer, and not one has refused to say it.

Let me say something about the opportunities. I have found an entrance into some houses, but one must needs be careful and wise in the methods of working amongst them.

The Turkish women and homes are very different from those of the Arabs. Mrs. Barny and I visited our neighbors, and I was struck with the vast difference. We were greeted with many compliments and salaams, and requested to enter and be seated. The room was fully furnished, with tables, chairs, cushions, etc., and the ladies of the house actually sitting on chairs. Cigarettes were first offered, and as we politely declined, we were next offered sweet sherbet and after that coffee in very tiny cups. Many questions were asked (it is not impolite to ask your business, your age, and all personal matters) and answered. As we were leaving we were warmly invited to come again, and so far there are opportunities and open doors everywhere.

But what are the needs? Well, they are manifold, but I will only mention two. First, women who are willing and able to enter into their difficulties with the spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus, and a supreme love for Him to "spend and be spent." Secondly: *Their* need, what is it? The missing link in their creed is the cross, for Mohammed deliberately rejected the doctrine of the Atonement.

Lastly, the contrast of the two fields from my own personal experience. In Bahrein, because of previous work among the women there is greater freedom in working. I found an entrance and a welcome into very many houses. I had no difficulty in disposing of portions of Scriptures, and had many requests to read the Sacred Word, and invitations to come again. In a measure I gained the love and confidence of the children. So far I have not found that to be the case in Busrah. The women are afraid to touch the book offered to them, and seem very much harder to reach. I tried to get some little children here, to teach them, and went to their houses; their mother was perfectly willing for me to do so, but the children cried and said, "Oh, no! You will cut our throats if we come."

I need your prayers that I may be fitted and guided in this work, so that I may not mar in any way the work of the Kingdom among these people.

TOURING IN OMAN.

REV. JAMES E. MOERDYK.

Up to date of writing three tours have been completed in Oman. The colporters were out two times without the missionary, and the third tour was by the missionary accompanied by a colporter. Each tour was made in a different direction, for we endeavor to visit as many localities as possible. At no time had we any difficulty in getting among the people, although the last tour was twice postponed on account of Arab tribal feuds and was also shortened because of cholera which had entered the towns in our route. I shall remark briefly upon the character of the people and localities visited, and to finish shall relate a few instances bearing more directly upon the work accomplished.

Early in the year our most experienced colporter started on a visit south of Muscat, where for years back no one of the Mission has ventured. The town, which is the capital of the district, is known as a centre where slave dealers still persist in bringing unfortunates from Zanzibar and Africa to sell to the Mohammedans. Both England and France spend time and effort to stop this traffic and have in a measure succeeded. The inhabitants are divided into two parties who are constantly quarreling together. The governor, who is appointed by the Sultan of Muscat, lives in constant fear of being assaulted, and never leaves his house without a strong escort of soldiers. The colporter had previously met this man in Muscat and made friends with him, so that his reception was assured and he was well protected. One might fear that an escort of soldiers would prove a hindrance to the work, but in this case, it turned out to be a help. It opened the way for the colporter to go wherever he liked, and the soldiers were very friendly and willing to help in every difficulty. People in the villages were very ignorant and not even their sheikhs could read or write. They listened attentively when the colporter read to them and explained the message, but as soon as he left, all was darkness again. Traveling over mountains was difficult, and two days in a severe storm at sea was trying; but the colporter returned cheerful and encouraged because of the good talks he had had with different individuals. In the district along the coast north of Muscat traveling is easier, and with few exceptions there is no ill feeling towards Christians who may visit

there. In one town only of the many visited did the governor refuse to receive the colporter, and in a second the people united in refusing hospitality. Inland the people seemed pleased enough to receive a foreigner, but I soon learned that one reason for welcoming us was that they expected presents and other little things they asked for. I was surprised to find them so indifferent and even opposing all attempts to begin religious conversations. The colporter who had before visited many of these towns, also complained that the people were more indifferent than in other years. However, we read to them from the Book and witnessed as best we could.

But in spite of many things which might discourage, it was not always that way. In Sur for a whole day long a man persisted in following the colporter to scold and curse all who agreed to purchase Scriptures, but that night a Nicodemus came to learn about Christ. In another village in that district the people begged the colporter to stay to teach them from the Book. When he departed several purchased portions of Scripture, trusting that some time they might find a reader to teach them. It is not pleasant to spend a day, or even a portion of a day, with insane people. In this instance there were two such who persisted in imparting the news that the time would come and was near at hand when Islam would fall and Christ's religion be supreme. While some of the Arabs were angry with this, others thought it wise to buy books and investigate for themselves. In a village near Muscat there lives a sheikh who is a prisoner of the Sultan. For two years or more he lived in Muscat near the Mission House and in that time read the Bible and often questioned the missionary until he quite fully understands, and acknowledges that salvation is not in Islam but in Christ only. But this man is like the young man in Christ's time who departed sorrowful because he was very rich. He prefers his monthly allowance and the favor of the Sultan to peace and riches in Christ. When the colporters visit that village this man always entertains them and invites many neighbors and friends to come and hear the Gospel. Two others, a father and son, in a village nearer Muscat entertained us for a night. Both of these, and especially the younger man, is eager to learn the Bible. They often visit Muscat, and always come to the house for morning prayers, and if on Sunday, attend both the preaching service and the Bible class.

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